Colin Mochrie vs. Jesus H. Christ:

Messages About Masculinities and Fame in Online Video Conversations

Lori Kendall
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
loriken@uiuc.edu

Abstract

With the availability of relatively easy-to-use tools for online video creation and distribution, people are increasingly producing videos not just for artistic expression, but also as a form of communication. This article examines two types of online video conversations, one within a specific online subculture, and one a series of responses to one particularly well-known video. Videos lend themselves to the expression of ambiguity, contradictory meanings, taboo topics, and emotions. Within these two video conversations, topics include discussions of masculinity, identity, and fame.

1. Introduction

Media literacy scholars have suggested that cultures in the developed world are shifting from an emphasis on text and writing to the increasing dominance of images [4, 5, 6]. Most research in this area has focused on production and dissemination of images through mass media and/or individuals and groups as image viewers and consumers. In particular, scholars and activists have emphasized the need for increasing media literacy and including instruction in visual literacy in school curricula[2].

This perspective positions young people primarily as consumers of images. But with the increasing availability of relatively easy-to-use tools for the production of still and moving images -- digital photography, Photoshop software, Macromedia (now owned by Adobe) Flash software -- as well as mechanisms for wide distribution of such images online (Flickr and other photo hosting sites; somethingawful.com and similar hosts for, among other things, photoshopping contests; and video hosting sites such as albinoblacksheep and Newgrounds), many young people are becoming prolific producers of online multimedia content. In particular, video production, once a practice that required expensive equipment and relatively sophisticated technical skills, can now be accomplished entirely through software. People create and distribute videos using original artwork, content available online, or footage from inexpensive web cameras. While many amateur video producers create their own images through scanned art, computer graphics programs, or videography and photography, many online videos are assembled multimedia collages made up of pop culture images, downloaded music, and "found" photographs of various kinds, all harvested from the Internet.

Some videos become immensely popular, and the practice of sharing online videos has garnered enough attention to push it from a select Internet subculture to a relatively mainstream phenomenon, including appearances in other venues, such as BravoTV's "Viral Videos" program. Online video producers are creating new genres of artistic production, and many videos are primarily intended as stand-alone artworks created for the appreciation of various audiences. However, many videos are rich in intertextual references, and in some cases make explicit reference to other videos and other video producers, resulting in ongoing multimedia conversations.

This paper examines online amateur flash videos as a new multimedia form of persistent conversation. I compare two different types of video conversations. One is an ongoing exchange amongst members of an online subculture, the group of people producing a form of flash animation known as "animutation". The other consists of videos created by a wide range of people in response to a single, well-known video, "Numa Numa Dance." These two cases illustrate the new and sometimes quite sophisticated ways that people are using images to communicate.

1530-1605/07 $20.00 © 2007 IEEE

This paper is part of a larger project on amateur online videos, and the videos I discuss herein are only a small subsection of videos I have viewed over the past year. To augment the two example sets for this article, I also conducted some supplemental online searches. I located videos related to Numa Numa primarily through searches on video hosting sites such as Newgrounds.com, as well as through more general web searches using Google. Animutations were also found on Newgrounds, as well as on several sites devoted specifically to the animutation subculture, such as "Animutation Central" (www.eviltrailmix.com/ animutation). I selected examples for this paper based on their ability to illustrate the ways in which videos can function as part of a conversation, and to illuminate some of the particular features of video conversations.

To be considered part of a "conversation," a video must do two things. First, it must explicitly reference a previous video or video producer (or, if originating the conversation, be so referenced). Second, it must communicate something relevant both to the audience of the video and to the previous content. In short, it says something to or about the previous video or video producer. However, despite this temporal and content similarity to other types of online text or audio conversations, video conversations differ from non-image-based conversations. While video conversations can include multiple videos, these rarely align in strict turn-taking fashion. Video conversations are much less likely than other types of conversation to be linear and unidimensional.

The multiple channels of information available through video – text, images, movement, sound – allow for multiple and complex meanings. Thus video conversations lend themselves to the expression of (1) ambiguity, (2) self-contradictory meanings, (3) topics that are taboo, and (4) emotions or opinions that are difficult to express. These four features can occur through text and other forms of communication as well, but work particular well in the multi-media digital video format. The communication of ambiguity and contradictory messages through text can be difficult, whereas people steeped in image-heavy mass media since early childhood can often manipulate images in sophisticated ways. Further, a single frame from a video, layered with various images, requires some interpretation from the viewer. While this also can be true of text, videos again provide an easier medium in which to leave meanings open, while still providing a satisfyingly entertaining experience.

There is however a problem with referring to sets of videos as conversations. In addition to the difficulty in identifying specific turns, it can be difficult, if not impossible to locate the specific boundaries of a video "conversation," both with regard to its temporality and with regard to the participants. Once a video is posted on the Internet, numerous people may respond to it in kind, without necessarily referencing earlier "turns." Further, since the existence of a video within a conversation relies at least to some extent on the intent of the creator, it can be impossible to identify the boundaries of the conversation without being a participant in it (and it may not even be possible then).

Thus, rather than suggest ways to identify online video conversations, or put these forward for traditional conversational analysis, my aim here is to suggest ways in which videos are conversational, and to provide some suggestions for analyzing them with that in mind. The examples I provide herein do not represent complete conversations, but rather illustrative excerpts.

2. Animutation

Niel Cicierega, then 14, created the video genre he named animutation in 2001, with his first video "Japanese Pokerap." His second video, "Hyakugojyuuichi!!," inspired others to imitate his style, producing videos first termed "fanimutations," to acknowledge their derivative nature. Over time, as the genre flourished and a vibrant subculture emerged around this style of flash animation, the term fanimutation was mostly dropped in favor of calling all videos created in this style animutation.

Animutations have several distinctive features. Most take the form of music videos, with music often selected from children's television shows in languages other than English. The lyrics of these songs are textually mistranslated into English soundalikes, resulting in silly lyrics (reproduced as text onscreen) such as "give me my sweater back or I'll play the guitar" (from "Hyakugojyuuichi"). (See [3] for an analysis of the practice of lyric mistranslations in these and other videos.) Animutations always include images garnered from popular culture, especially pictures of celebrities and images from children's television programs. These images are animated in a deliberately crude style, similar to the cut-out animation style of the television show "South Park," and are often altered (mutated) in ways to enhance the humor of the video. In addition to this broader form of intertextuality, animutations always reference other animutations, using an extensive common palate of repeated images. Some of these are almost required inclusions, such as images of Colin Mochrie (a Canadian comic best know for his work on

the television improv show "Whose Line is it Anyway"), and of Jay Jay the Jet Plane, a character from a popular television show geared towards young children.

Their intragenre intertextuality is part of what allows these videos to function as a form of persistent conversation. The use of repeated images and themes ties the videos together thematically. In addition, the producers of animutations form a distinct subculture which avails itself of several other types of online communication media, including asynchronous bulletin boards and systems for commenting on and reviewing each others' videos, such as that available on newgrounds.com, a video hosting service. The context of animutations within this subculture positions them as, among other things, group identity statements.

Many of the intertextual references and repeated images mean little more than an assertion that the producer is part of the animutation subculture. However, animutation creators often position images from previous videos in a way that tells an ongoing story. For instance, when JayJay the Jet Plane appears in "Hyakugojyuuichi," he is shot by another character, leaving three bullet holes. (See Figure 1.) JayJay later appears in "Irrational Exuberance" (by Greg Falcon under the username of Veloso), sporting three bandaids in exactly the same spots. (See Figure 2.) In "JamezBond" (by Dan Weiss under the username of Dwedit), JayJay turns the tables, shooting at James Bond (in the person of a young Roger Moore). (See Figure 3.)

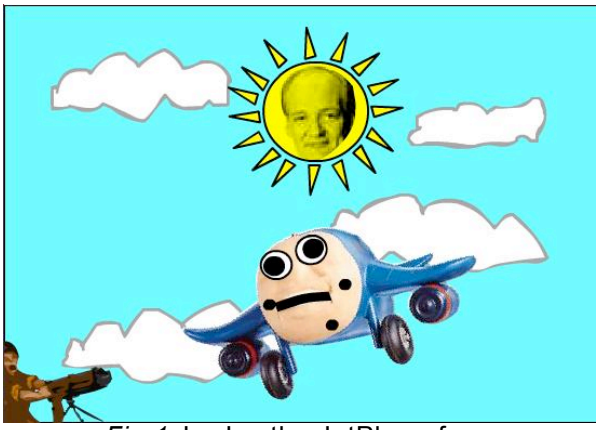

Fig. 1 JayJay the JetPlane from "Hyakogojyuuichi"

Fig. 2 JayJay from "Irrational Exuberance"

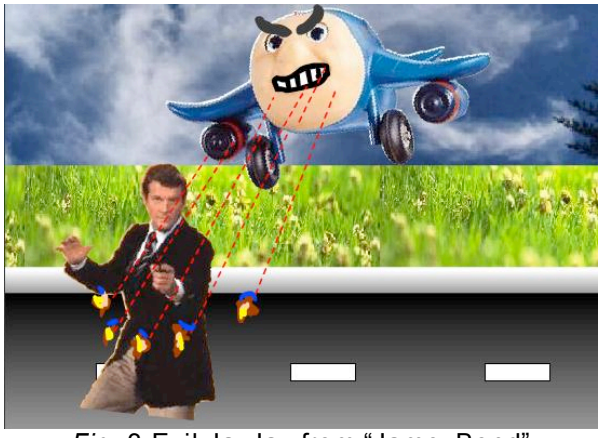

Fig. 3 Evil JayJay from "JamezBond"

In another example of this type of subcultural reference, Andrew Kepple's elaborate "Colin Mochrie vs. Jesus H. Christ" trilogy uses many recurring animutation images, especially those of Mochrie, to tell a (largely fictional) story about the animutation subculture itself, in which conflict about the terms animutation vs. fanimutation is resolved by making the term animutation all-inclusive. The final episode in the trilogy includes a retrospective montage of Mochrie images from over a dozen other videos, demonstrating the centrality of images of the comedian to the subculture, as well as acknowledging the contributions of other subculture members. (See Figure 4.)

Fig. 4 Colin Mochrie Montage

3. Animutation and Masculinity

When viewed as conversations, the messages about group identity and subculture in animutations are not particularly rich or complex. However, other messages are also exchanged through these videos. Animutations are produced almost solely by teenage boys and young men (a demographic group that dominates the creation of online animated videos generally). Their shared references include content relating to issues of special interest to members of this limited demographic. In particular, many animutations address issues of masculinity, especially with content humorously contemplating what constitutes an acceptable masculine identity. Strikingly, there are very few female characters in animutations, and most of the oft-repeated male characters fall into one of two groups: (1) effeminate or feminized men (Colin Mochrie, PeeWee Herman, Richard Simmons) or (2) childish characters or characters associated with childhood (JayJay the Jet Plane, characters from the Mario series of video games, book-cover images of a young Harry Potter). These categories constitute proscribed identities for young males. Conforming to hegemonic masculinity[1] requires distancing oneself from the childish and the feminine. More hegemonic and "tough-guy" characters do also appear in animutations, but are less likely to be central and less likely to be repeated from video to video. Tough guys are also sometimes feminized through dress, as in an image of wrestler Chris Benoit in a wedding dress (from "Hyakugojyuuichi").

To some extent, humorous and irreverent treatment of these characters positions them as Other and creates distance between them and the creator (and audience). However, with their sometimes celebratory focus on non-traditional representations of masculinity, animutations also represent an alternative discussion of gender. This is particularly clear when they are compared to the mainstream genre they resemble, music videos. The music videos shown on cable television channels such as MTV and VH1 often contain stereotypical images of men and women, and depict women in highly sexualized ways. [8] In contrast, animutations contain almost no images of women, and the images of men mock masculine stereotypes, although they sometimes also reinforce them.

Colin Mochrie's position as the most central iconic figure in animutation culture illustrates this thematic trend. Mochrie's gentle and unassuming manner stands out in the brash world of stand-up and improv comedians. On "Whose Line is it Anyway," Mochrie often plays female or effeminate roles. The frequent jokes about homosexuality on the show, often directed at Mochrie, make it a good fit with the culture of teenage boys generally. More recently, Mochrie has appeared in a series of commercials as "the Snack Fairy," complete with tutu and magic wand, further cementing his pop-cultural connection to effeminacy.

In animutations, images of Mochrie often appear in the form of animated head shots. (These are easier to digitally manipulate in the simple cartoonish style of animutations.) In "Hyakugojyuuichi," his face rises within a Teletubbies-style sun. In "Irrational Exuberance," it spins on a turntable. In "JamezBond," it appears at the very end on a box of Wheaties. These appearances of Mochrie's face alone rely on the viewer's knowledge of Mochrie's image to communicate a particular iconic image of masculinity.

In other animutations, Mochrie's head is attached to a drawn cartoon body. These videos are more likely to depict Mochrie in humorously exaggerated stereotypical masculine roles. As in television sitcoms, the humor in these animutations results from the subversion of stereotypical expectations. For instance, in the second and third parts of the "Colin Mochrie vs. Jesus H. Christ" trilogy, by Andrew Kepple (under the user name TmsT – Too Much Spare Time), Colin Mochrie appears as a buff action hero, throwing punches in arena-style fist fights with other characters. (These fights also reference popular video games such as Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter.) After being killed by an evil plastic Jesus figurine, Mochrie resurrects in flame-haloed glory to finally triumph, bringing other previously killed characters back to life. (See Figure 5.) This over-the-top depiction of Mochrie as hero demonstrates the flexibility of visual images. These scenes valorize standard narratives of hegemonic masculinity, as received through numerous Hollywood movies, in which the hero suffers tremendous physical pain and degradation only to come back shooting [7].

But part of the humor comes from the unlikely appearance of Colin Mochrie in that role, emphasizing Mochrie's non-hegemonic status. On the other hand, the outrageousness and humor of Kepple's version of this story also parodies the hegemonic vision of physically strong and violent masculinity. This dual and contradictory depiction would be difficult to do through textual narrative alone, demonstrating one of the particular affordances of video communication.

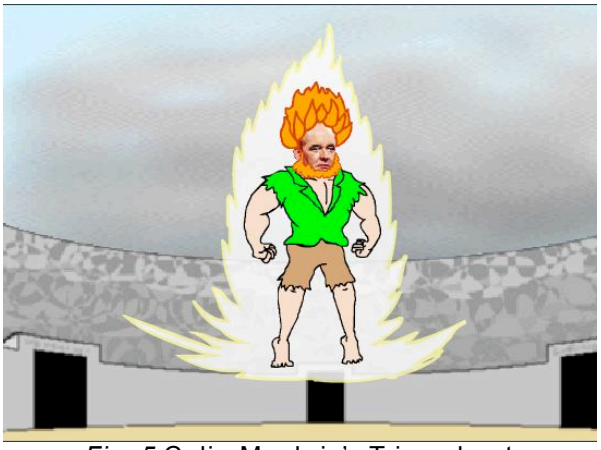

Fig. 5 Colin Mochrie's Triumphant Resurrection

While many animutations include few explicit references to masculinity other than the choice and treatment of particular characters, others include more specific messages in on-screen text or in the plot of the narrative. For instance, "Irrational Exuberance" includes both implicit and explicit gay references. The soundtrack for "Irrational Exuberance" can itself be taken as an implicit gay reference. It consists of the song "Yatta," by the Japanese humor group "Green Leaves." An original music video of Green Leaves, very popular online, shows the six men in the group dancing around on stage wearing nothing but underwear featuring large green leaves on the front. That American audiences, especially young men, interpret this as "gay," is reinforced by numerous online descriptions of Green Leaves that compare them to the American disco group Village People. More specific references to gayness in "Irrational Exuberance" include various jokes about anal sex, as well as a somewhat over-elaborate joke designating Richard Simmons as a "fruit." (See Figure 6.)

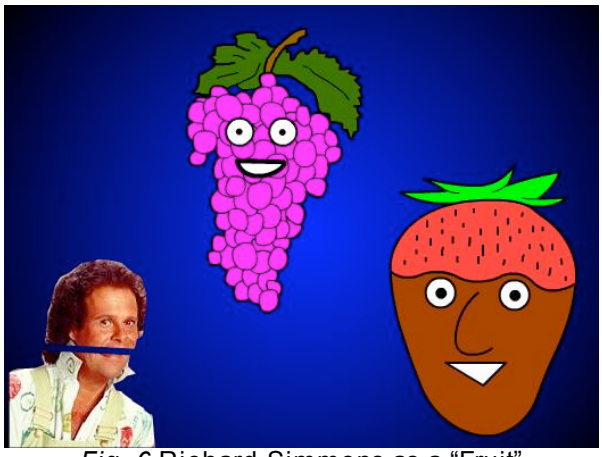

Fig. 6 Richard Simmons as a "Fruit"

"JamezBond" presents an unusually explicit example of animutation masculinity themes. Unlike the ironic use of Colin Mochrie as hero, JamezBond features the character James Bond as its hero, using images of the three most popular actors portraying James Bond in movies: Sean Connery, Roger Moore, and Pierce Brosnan. The fictional character of James Bond is arguably as complete a representation of hegemonic masculinity as it is possible to produce. He is smart, fit, strong, and handsome. He is old enough to be successful and well-known but young enough to be active and virile. Despite his government job, he frequently appears in the trappings of the upper classes (in a tuxedo, drinking his "shaken" martini, in a casino or fancy restaurant). He is portrayed as very sexually active and irresistible to women. He is dangerous and when required, violent, but is almost always unemotional – cool and collected even in extreme circumstances.

"JamezBond" celebrates this pinnacle of masculinity, explicitly opposing him to effeminate gay males. The other characters include a wide range of gay or effeminate characters along with several characters from children's programs. The evil mastermind, for instance, is the bad guy from the first Care Bears movie. In the plot, "gay Peter Pan" is fired from his job and telephones several other famous gay (or purportedly gay) characters for support. These include cartoon characters (Big Gay Al from "South Park," Waylon Smithers from "The Simpsons") as well as celebrities (Richard Simmons, Christopher Lowell, Rosie O'Donnell). This scene also features some joke inclusions, such as a picture of Tom Fulp, the creator of Newgrounds. It thus engages in a typical adolescent male put-down, calling another acquaintance gay. The characters then hold a gay rights rally (see Figure 7), which is later revealed to be part of the plot of the evil mastermind character. Towards the end of the video,

Gay Peter Pan, for no discernable reason, dies by jumping into a volcano. The video thus depicts gay males as part of an evil plot, and the hegemonically masculine James Bond as the hero who puts a stop to it.

Fig. 7 Gay Rights Demonstration in "JamezBond"

The images of James Bond also appear in a more dignified manner than other characters. The typical style of characters "singing" within animutation involves manipulating the lower jaw as a square cut-out that moves up and down. This ends up making the characters look relatively silly. (Animutation artists frequently play with this convention, with jaws sometimes dropping off completely.) The James Bond images in this video, taken from promotional material for the films, do not "sing," always appear with guns, and are not otherwise altered or mutated in any way. They thus maintain their suave appearance, in contrast to the other characters, and to most other characters in animutations. (See Figure 8.)

Fig. 8 Sean Connery as James Bond from "JamezBond"

While discussions of masculinity are hardly taboo in American culture, they form a treacherous terrain for young men. Although people may tell boys and men to "be a man," a "real man" does so without effort or thought. This contradiction leads to anxiety. Thus conversations about masculinity among young men usually hold that anxiety at bay through jokes or put-downs. Most of these rely on misogyny and homophobia to delineate all that hegemonic masculinity is not. While mockery directed at homosexual men abounds in animutations, the depictions are often complex and nuanced. Colin Mochrie may have been selected for particular focus because of his non-hegemonic status, yet he is also celebrated and admired. Animutation videos thus provide a relatively complex discussion of masculinity and masculine representations within popular culture. This demonstrates the ways in which these multimedia creations can effectively address complex and emotionally risky topics.

4. Numa Numa Dance

In late 2004, Gary Brolsma, a 19-year-old from New Jersey, created a flash video set to a tune he found on the Internet. "Dragostea Din Tei," a Romanian-language song recorded by the Moldavian group O-Zone, had already inspired numerous amateur videos, including the Japanese video "Maiyahi," from which Brolsma borrowed the soundtrack. Brolsma's video, titled "Numa Numa Dance," includes footage of Brolsma in his bedroom, lip-synching to the song and dancing in his chair, as well as numerous inserted images of friends, pop-culture figures, and images inspired by mistranslated lyrics from the song. (See Figure 9.) For a later, more popular, version of the video, Brolsma removed the inserted images, leaving only the video footage. Brolsma's immensely popular video has generated hundreds of discussion threads in various online forums. Mentions of "Numa Numa Dance" have also appeared in mainstream news venues, including *The New York Times*, "The Today Show," and numerous other print and television venues.

Fig. 9 Gary Brolsma in "Numa Numa Dance"

Many people have created videos in response to "Numa Numa Dance." These videos, by people in various different social contexts, do not form an ongoing subcultural conversation in the same way that the animutation videos do. However, even when the "conversation" so formed consists of only two turns, the responding videos do reference the original inspiration. They also communicate information about the original to both its creator and to members of the original audience. Some, in referencing the phenomenon of increasing numbers of "Numa Numa" videos, also represent a third conversational "turn," that responds in a limited fashion both to "Numa Numa Dance" and to its successors.

4.1 Homage

The most cheerful videos exist in homage to the original. In these videos, people jump onto an increasingly full bandwagon, either in hopes of themselves becoming as famous as Brolsma, or merely to celebrate the exuberance of the original music and dance. For instance, 5T3Ve, a participant on Newgrounds (where Brolsma originally posted his video), created "numa?," a video of two young men (probably himself and a friend) also dancing and lip-synching in a suburban bedroom. Their performance, while clearly unpolished and not as unselfconscious as Brolsma's, nevertheless emphasizes the fun of the song. Their video makes several specific references to the original, including similar inserted images, and some imitative dance moves, and a depiction of Brolsma's signature eyebrow raise. (See Figure 10.)

Fig. 10 Lego Character Raising Eyebrow in "numa?"

"Numa Numa Class" depicts an entire classroom of kids watching "Numa Numa Dance" on a screen at the front of the room while loudly singing along and, by virtue of simultaneously performing Brolsma's dance moves from their chairs, creating a choreographed group dance sequence. (See Figure 11.) The camera at the back of the classroom captures only the backs of the students' heads and arms, but the boisterous singing, frequent laughter, and ending applause, all position their activities – singing, dancing, and video-creation – as something akin to people at parties participating in the latest dance craze.

Fig. 11 Image from "Numa Numa Class"

While the explicit message content of these videos goes little further than "yay Gary!," the impetus behind their creation likely stems from something deeper. With the new opportunities for creation and dissemination of content afforded by the Internet comes the possibility that anyone can have their "15 megabytes of fame." Obscure talents might be recognized and ordinary people appreciated for their uniqueness. Brolsma, without money, model-quality

good looks, or unusual talent, accomplished a degree of fame previously rarely available to any other than professional performers. While that fame has been for Brolsma a double-edged sword, as it often is, it is nevertheless something that many find desirable.

"American Idle," a video by Dustin McLean (aka Dustball), connects "Numa Numa Dance" to another modern avenue for fame, the televised singing competition "American Idol." This video depicts an animated version of Gary Brolsma as a competitor on that show, with commentary by the three famous "American Idol" judges: Randy Jackson, Paula Abdul, and Simon Cowell. (See Figure 12.) Predictably (for those familiar with the show), "Paula" positively gushes, while "Simon" states he would rather "have rusty nails" shoved into his ears than listen to the song again, as the in-studio audience boos this negative reaction. These conflicting opinions, along with a somewhat unflattering animation of Brolsma, present an ambivalent picture both of Brolsma's fame and of his performance. More importantly, through its reference to reality TV contests such as "American Idol," the flash video "American Idle" positions Brolsma's fame more broadly within an international obsession with fame and media exposure.

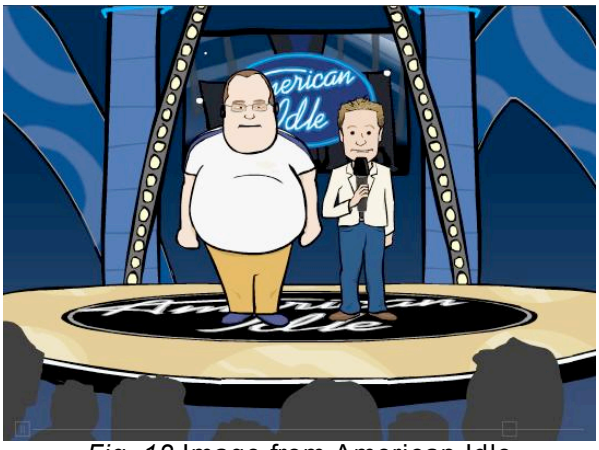

Fig. 12 Image from American Idle

4.2 Parodies and Mockery

Along with the hope of fame and recognition comes a deep fear. Performing in front of an audience potentially numbering in the millions carries risks. Maybe your talents aren't as good as you think. Maybe you look ridiculous on camera. Many videos created in response to "Numa Numa Dance" suggest that Brolsma's video ought to be a subject of derision rather than of celebration.

The title of "Dumbass Dumbass Dance," by AntiClockClock (a Newgrounds participant), effectively expresses a negative evaluation of "Numa Numa Dance" reinforced through mockingly imitative dance moves and references to Gary Brolsma's weight. "An End to All Numa," by Wario2k3 (also a Newgrounds participant), suggests ending the Numa Numa craze through violence. In this video, an animated figure depicting Gary Brolsma is beheaded by a popular video game character. (See Figure 13.)

Fig. 13 Brolsma Beheaded

Few such videos remain on Newgrounds, but others have previously appeared. Negative Numa Numa parodies deemed overly rude and/or without independent artistic merit likely get voted off by other Newgrounds participants. For instance, a search of Numa Numa-related titles from March 2005 returned videos with the titles "Numa numa RETARD!" and "Fat Bastard." Neither are currently available anywhere online, but the titles and accompanying commentary by the authors, as displayed in the search results, clearly position these videos as negative responses to Brolsma's performance.

The references to Brolsma's weight, also found in numerous text forums online, illustrate another fear fueling these mocking parody videos. Brolsma, a young, white, overweight male alone in his room in front of a computer, embodies the negative stereotype of the nerd. Despite increasing Internet participation amongst members of many demographic groups, online social activity still carries some stigma. Mocking Brolsma distances the creators of these videos (and originators of other negative online commentary) from the stigmatized identity of the asocial, undesirable nerd. Fear of this stereotype continues to haunt those who communicate with others online, whether through text or through video.

4.3 "Numa Is Everywhere"

As more and more people view the original "Numa Numa Dance," and as many create Numa Numa videos of their own, some have begun referencing Numa Numa's ubiquity. Similar to

commentary on the subject of personal fame, these videos express both positive and negative reactions to Numa Numa's continuing popularity.

For instance, "Numa is Everywhere" presents a series of still photographs. Each features some form of media device, including computers, televisions, arcade games and handheld game players, personal digital assistants, and cell phones. In a clever bit of video animation, on every screen of every device, "Numa Numa Dance" plays. (See Figure 14.) Further digital image manipulation inserts references to Gary Brolsma in many of the scenes. One image shows a magazine cover photo of Apple CEO Steve Jobs holding an iPod, on which the video improbably (given that the image is of a static magazine) plays. In another, "Numa Numa Dance" appears on a stadium screen, while the soundtrack picks up some reverb to lend verisimilitude. One image even places us at the helm of a starship, looking at Numa Numa on the viewscreen.

Fig. 14 Image from "Numa Numa is Everywhere"

At worst, this video provides a neutral depiction of the phenomenon, documenting, in a faux reportage style, the ubiquity of Brolsma's video. "Numa is Everywhere" includes no mocking or negative images. In fact, many of its images suggest a more positive reading. People in the photos stare raptly at the screens or proudly hold up their devices. Viewing "Numa Numa Dance" is presented as pleasurable and as linking together people in various circumstances and from different walks of life. "Numa is Everywhere" also depicts "Numa Numa Dance" as an aspect of modern society, presented on valuable electronic devices both large and small.

Providing a more negative evaluation of "Numa Numa"'s ubiquity, "Numa Gone Wild" tells a story of one man's attempt to escape the repetitions of "Numa Numa" that he encounters during every step of his day, from his clock radio, to his car, to his computer at work. We last see him screaming from the back a "Numa Fan Club" bus he inadvertently boards after leaping from an airplane into the middle of the desert.

The surprisingly recent "Chronicles of Numa," created by Shadow_Panda in May 2006 (a year and a half after the original "Numa Numa Dance" video), tells a similar narrative tale. In "Chronicles of Numa," a Newgrounds participant, realizing that his positive vote allowed "Numa Numa Dance" to survive and continue to dominate the Internet, travels back in time from 2009 to 2004 to change his decision. "Chronicles of Numa" makes several specific references to Newgrounds, including images of Newground screens, mentions of specific video genres and of Newgrounds' voting and evaluation practices. In this way, it addresses its negative evaluation of the effects of the persistent popularity of "Numa Numa Dance," directly to the Newgrounds subculture.

Videos created in response to Brolsma's "Numa Numa Dance" cannot be understood without reference to the original, and communicate several messages about that original video and its cultural context. The sentiments expressed in these videos could easily be expressed through text, and indeed exist in that form elsewhere online. The fact that people take the (sometimes considerable) time and effort to formulate their response in the same media as the original demonstrates people's attempts to use video not just as performance, but as conversation.

5. Conclusion

Images increasingly saturate the media and our daily lives. Our immersion in these images leads some critics to fear that the ubiquity of advertising and related media leads us to uncritically absorb their emotion-laid messages, swimming through them, as Sut Jhally describes it, like a fish through water. Yet, increasing numbers of people, especially young people, are taking up the creation of images, inventing new genres of artistic expression. Given the rich possibilities for expression through multimedia videos, it should not be surprising that people use them not just for singular artistic expression, but as a form of conversation.

Most videos distributed over the Internet probably do not constitute contributions to ongoing video conversations. However we are very early in the rapid expansion of video as a form of expression. It is likely that new genres and new uses for video will continue to emerge. One new genre that I have not

discussed, for instance, is the video blog. This hybridization of the previously text-based (or photo-based) practice of blogging, with video might particularly lend itself to conversational uses.

Videos can accommodate a high level of complexity and ambiguity. They can combine the emotional appeal of music and images with the further nuances provided by text and lyrics. It seems likely that the future will see continued hybridization along these lines. Perhaps videos will appear hyperlinked to text, or online video-sharing forums (YouTube, Newgrounds, etc.) will begin to include more sophisticated capabilities for textual commentary and exchange. The domination of video and related new media productions by young men also suggests that the relationship of women and girls to these media needs further exploration.

9. Acknowledgements

My thanks to John Paolillo for sharing his March 2005 Newground search results, and for his helpful insights regarding these videos. I would also like to thank the three HICSS reviewers, who provided many helpful and thought-provoking comments on an earlier version of this article.

10. References

[1] Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

[2] Jhally, Sut. 1990. Image-based culture: Advertising and popular culture. *The World & I*. July 1990, article 17591.

[3] Kendall, Lori. 2006. All Your Base Are Belong to Us: Humor and Borderwork in Amateur Online Videos. *Conference Proceedings of CATaC '06 (Cultural Attitudes Towards Technology and Communication)*, Murdoch, Australia: School of Information Technology, Murdoch University.

[4] Kress, Gunther. 2005. Gains and losses: New forms of texts, knowledge, and learning. *Computers and Composition*. 22(1) 5-22.

[5] Leiss, William, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally. 1990. *Social Communication in Advertising*. Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson Canada.

[6] McDonagh, Deana, Nan Goggin, and Joseph Squier. 2005. Signs, symbols, and subjectivity: An alternative view of the visual. *Computers and Composition*. 22(1) 79-86.

[7] Pfeil, Fred. 1995. *White Guys*. London: Verso.

[8] Seidman, Steven. 1999. Revisiting sex-role stereotyping in MTV videos. *International Journal of Instructional Media*. 26(1) 11-22.

10. References

The following is a list of all the videos referenced in this article, with online locations. I have tried to use the original location for each video, but in some cases those websites are no longer available, and I have instead supplied the most easily locatable version.

American Idle
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/227808
An End to All Numa
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/242354
Chronicles of Numa
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/312466
Colin Mochrie vs. Jesus H. Christ
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/138029
Dumbass Dumbass Dance
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/209643
Hyakugojyuuichi!!
http://www.eviltrailmix.com/animutation/
Irrational Exuberance
www.albinoblacksheep.com/flash/yatta.php
JamezBond
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/68658
Japanese Pokerap
http://www.eviltrailmix.com/animutation/
numa?
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/214173
Numa Gone Wild
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/233542
Numa is Everywhere
http://newgrounds.com/portal/view/225085
Numa Numa Class
http://www.newgrounds.com/video/numaclass.html
Numa Numa Dance
http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/206373